

SB453 TESTIMONY

MARTIN & CONSTANCE N.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

MARYLAND

POSITION: SUPPORT

Our daughter is currently hospitalized at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital after expressing suicidal thoughts. Three weeks ago, she was hospitalized at Holy Cross Hospital in a medical emergency triggered by her mental health condition. She has been hospitalized twelve times (including overnight stays for observation) since 2017. My daughter and our family have suffered because Maryland does not offer Assisted Outpatient Treatment

We are the parents of a daughter who has had multiple episodes of hospital stays, police, sheriffs, emergency responses, court appearances, evictions, job losses, since 2017 because she is non-compliant in following outpatient treatment. Over this time, we have witnessed a slow, steady but unmistakable deterioration in her mental, emotional, and physical health. Due to her condition, she has refused to enroll in or participate in any current programs and would not let us assist her in enrolling thereof. Although she has been aggressive and abusive throughout her illness, and threatening to do harm to herself or others, she is now increasingly talking about suicide. AOT could enable her to become compliant in her treatment options and thereby regain a measure of stability, control, and independence in her life not to mention relieving us the emotional and financial burden of caring for a person with a chronic and progressively worsening condition.

Our daughter first experienced mental health challenges when she was going to Law School in a nearby large city. She was discovered by the police wandering the streets at night in her night gown. We found her a week later as a "Jane Doe" in a Mental Health Hospital. She was discharged 4 months later. She tried to get her life back but complained about the side effects of the medications. Although the doctors tried different combinations, she became increasingly reluctant to take them. Which translated to more frequent breakdowns and hospital stays. We have had to go to the courts multiple times to get Temporary Guardianship to get her to treatment options. This had limited effect, as the Guardianships would last a few months, court processes were very draining, and she became adept at gaming the system. Her repeated cycling into mental health crises due to non-compliance exacted a heavy toll emotionally on the family; from frequent loud and angry outbursts and abusive language, property damage and trashing the house, hallucinations, threats, violent encounters with the Police and Sheriff's department when they came to enforce court ordered relocations to treatment facilities. Our youngest son, who shared a Jack and Jill bathroom with our daughter bore a substantial portion of the abuse, so much so that he became angry, withdrawn and demanded why she had to continue living at home. Which brings up the other effect of her treatment non-compliance. She could not keep any job for longer than a few weeks, she ran up thousands of dollars in student debt trying to go to graduate school online several times and

dropping out every time, she has run up thousands of dollars in credit card debt, totaled our car and even the insurance car rental all in the same week, she has been evicted from apartments multiple times due to financial and behavioral issues; treatment non-compliance has led her to refuse services (housing, SSA rental assistance etc.) and she has refused to give us permission to pursue the same on her behalf. SSA has cut off her assistance (which we had been able to secure one time during one of the Temporary Guardianships) and now she is totally dependent on us. Apart from the emotional toll, cancelled vacations, family get togethers, constant tension and stress in the house- the financial burden on us has been enormous- we calculate over the period of 6 years to have spent over \$15,000 because she will not accept to access services. This is not to mention time away from work that either one of us must take whenever she has an episode. The neighbors have had to get accustomed to the frequent police and emergency vehicles traffic around our home. With her worsening condition through each cycle, and associated lessening and coarsening of her mental abilities- she has long past exceeded our abilities to care for her or guide her to appropriate care.

In conclusion, we support AOT as it will create a path for sustainable treatment of our daughter's condition and others like her; and save her life.

In conclusion we ask the committee for a favorable report on HB576.